

## SWEETWATERS

'SWEETWATERS' FROM PAGE 6  
Haze' riff that never actually arrived at the song, but the combination of good natured bounciness and fine musicianship certainly hit the right note with the crowd. DM

### TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS

Toots proved himself not only one of the great voices in contemporary music but also a pretty mean evangelist and showman. His music falls at the end of the reggae spectrum that shades back into American soul music and the style of his performance was very much in the soul tradition. The songs were spiced not only with movement and showmanship but also with 'the message', the object being to deliver the audience not just an entertainment event but an uplifting experience. On this occasion Toots had his work cut out to rouse the rather sun-sapped audience to the required level of participation but ultimately managed. The band handled the many changes in pace and tempo required by Toots' mid-song sermons and exhortations with awe inspiring ease. The songs played spanned a large portion of his already lengthy career, several were stretched out into fairly major work-outs but it was inevitably the hit single, 'Beautiful Woman' held back for the encore that proved the big crowd pleaser. DM

### JOHN MARTYN

A difficult man to categorise, a survivor from the folksy singer songwriter phenomenon but with a strong jazz bent, he seems, these days, to be taking a rather harsher, more direct, electric approach. The combination of some pretty intense material with his gutsy bluesy vocals, nasty guitar and the atmospheric jazzy accompaniment from the rhythm section made him one of the popular hits of the weekend. Already a man with a strong cult following in this country Martyn undoubtedly made more than a few converts to the cause. DM

### SCREAMING MEEEEES

After the impact of a couple of bright singles has worn off, the Meemees can start to sound monotonous. Certainly, they made little impact beyond the frontline punters. This band needs to gig more in more appropriate venues. A little more exposure to the bright lights could add volumes to their songwriting. DC

### THE LEGIONNAIRES

New Zealand's hybrid super-group could do no wrong in front of this crowd. Not even the sound problems bothered them very long. A predictable show, but safe as houses, thoroughly enjoyable and a lesson in survival. Top it off with a new national anthem in 'Billy Bold' and it's money in the hip pocket. DC

### THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS

If Richard Butler wants the Furs to be taken seriously he must be joking. They were great, but let's get it straight, they were as 'serious' as the Rolling Stones. Butler was a superb playactor, all Bowiesque gestures of emphasis and junkie stares. "You're so sweet," he would say coyly, campily, when the audience applauded. Just Hunky Dory. Brother Tim flashed his bass around in time-honoured rock style and guitarist John Ashton tried to get as much of the limelight as possible. And the music? The old songs worked the best - 'Sister Europe', 'Dumb Waiters', 'India' was an inspired choice as a closing song - a corrupt assault. The Furs succeeded because they were able to adjust to the alien surroundings and establish a contact with the audience. For the implications of failing to do that, just recall Ultravox at last year's festival. The Furs could have been better but they could have been a hell of a lot worse. RB

### TOMORROW'S PARTIES

The slot after the Furs was an unfortunate one for the band, but they made the best of it. Singer Monique varied from entertaining to embarrassing; her versions of Lou Reed songs are not to be encouraged. RB

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Eddie, Diehards

Brazier, Legionnaires.



John Martyn, Aerial Railway Stage.

## JOHN MARTYN

Half past noon, the day prior to his Sweetwaters' performance and John Martyn is just staggering out of bed. His drummer and bass player have been up for some time, soaking sun. They are adding to the tans they began during the previous week in Australia, but when Martyn emerges his pallor could be direct from his native Glasgow. He is dressed in jeans and a long-sleeved shirt and is carrying a bottle of scotch. He is frowning. Your interviewer feels somewhat circumspect, although this may be partly due to a great respect and love for Martyn's music.

As it transpires however, the Scotsman is in a very jovial mood and during an hour-long conversation that ranges through such subjects as gardening, European cuisine, football and music as diverse as Weather Report and Bulgarian folk, John Martyn talks animatedly and with considerable candour about his career.

Although late last year he did a British tour with a five-piece band, he is now travelling with only two other musicians. The reasons are not, he claims, merely economic:

"I quite seriously prefer it. It puts a bit more weight on me but it's a responsibility that I welcome because it's more spacious. It gives me more chance to sing in a creative fashion. There's much less to get in the way of melodic ideas now. The only melodic instruments are bass, my voice and guitar. The interplay is simpler. One can branch off tangentially with a lot more ease. The great thing about playing in a trio is that there's much more light and shade."

His aim, when performing live, is therefore to try for "as much

spontaneity as possible. It's what makes it interesting. If you went on and played the same every night you'd bore yourself shitless."

There is, nonetheless, to be a live album of the last British tour.

"I'll be mixing it in February. I didn't think I enjoyed the lineup that much in retrospect so I gave it a month without listening to it. But it's actually fairly good. I'm quite pleased with it."

It is understandable that Martyn prefers the stage to the recording studio.

"My business is the direct communication of emotion and, in terms of emotional kickback, recording is not as rewarding as playing live. It's more arduous. But this job - travelling's a pain in the arse - but the rest of it is pure joy. I get paid for enjoying myself."

When asked about the importance of the producer on his recent albums, Martyn momentarily adopts the tone and demeanour of a laird - "The producer? A mere nothing, a minion, a serf, lower than the lowest scum."

Phil Collins must have enjoyed working for him then?

Martyn laughs.

"No, seriously, the only time I've actually relinquished production control as a conscious move was on the last two albums. It seemed that since I was trying a new record company and everything I should really try a whole new approach. It worked to a certain extent. Phil, I think, did a good job on *Glorious Fool*. I think he'd do a better job now because he'd be less inhibited. There's a certain amount of mutual admiration and there was a lot of over-politeness, deference going on. It'll be easier next time - he's going to produce the next album I think - because I'll just fuck off out of the studio after we've done the tracks."

"Which is, I suppose, what I did on *Well Kept Secret*. I kept away as much as possible. Physically, I wasn't very well. I'd smashed my ribs up vaulting a fence after going swimming. I was in a lot of pain and having to get very drunk before I could sing. I was on very heavy pain killers."

An integral part of Martyn's enormously soulful singing style is often stretched and slurred verbal delivery.

"I frankly think I could communicate quite well in mumbles and grunts. (Laughs) I think that's why we print lyric sheets so people know what the fuck we're on about. No, seriously, the words are important, essential. Strangely enough I've made a conscious attempt over the last two albums to improve my diction. I regard the singing as stylistically interesting but the record company goes, 'We don't know what the bitch is saying man'. A few comments came down the pipeline. Sandy (Robertson, producer of *Well Kept Secret*) said, 'I say, old boy, could you enunciate more clearly?' So I did."

While frankly admitting his desire for greater commercial acceptance - "To be honest, everything we do now is based on the idea of becoming more successful" - Martyn is adamant that his move from English independent label Island to multinational WEA was not motivated simply by a desire for wider markets. He had been with Island since 1967 and had given them ten albums.

"They were very good to me. But you see I was very good for them because they didn't have to put any money into me. I had virtually no overheads. All they had to do was sell the

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